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SPECIAL INAUGURATION ISSUE

COUNCILMEMBER ATKINS SWORN IN FOR SECOND TERM

On Monday, December 2nd, City Councilmember Toni Atkins took the oath of office for her second, and final term representing the Third District. Atkins was re-elected in the March primary with over 60 percent of the vote, defeating former City Councilmember John Hartley by nearly 28 percent. Senior activist Gonzalo Garcia came in a distant third with 7 percent of the vote. Atkins also defeated Hartley in the 2000 primary and run-off elections.



Councilmember Atkins is sworn in for a second term representing the Third Council District. Administering the oath is Superior Court Judge Ted Weathers.

Also sworn in were Councilmembers Scott Peters, Brian Maisenschein and Jim Madaffer, each of whom was re-elected to second terms representing Districts 1, 5 and 7, respectfully, as well as newly elected City Attorney Mike Aguirre. At the time of the inauguration ceremony, the final results in the mayor's race had not yet been finalized. Two days later, Mayor Dick Murphy was sworn in after the results were certified.

TEXT OF COUNCILMEMBER ATKINS' INAUGURAL ADDRESS

Good morning.

Greetings to all my colleagues. And, welcome to my new colleague, Mike Aguirre. I look forward to working with you.

And I want to extend my thanks to City Attorney Casey Gwinn, an utter one of his favorite comments, "It's just good to be together." And Casey, I wish you all the best in the future.

I want to thank Scott Peters for his remarks on behalf of the city. He's a hard act to follow. And I also want to thank my colleagues on the council. We've worked together in the last two and four years on many, many important things in the city, and we could not have done it without the support and unity of each of us. And so, to Mayor Murphy and my council colleagues, to the City Manager, the City Attorney and the City Clerk, thank you very much for all you've done to make my transition into this office a successful one, I think.

I want to thank my friend Ted Weathers for swearing me in today. I'm truly honored for your being part of creating this wonderful memory for our LGBT community. Thank you, Ted.

I also want to thank my good friends and family members Kevin Tilden and Philip Diamond, and of course my partner, Jennifer LeSar, for your love, support and encouragement, and for walking precincts for me.

And to all of my friends and supporters here today—thank you for standing by me for another election and for helping me continue the vision of my original campaign four years ago—Real Commitment, Real Results—for another four years.

You have made this an incredible journey for me, and I thank you. To all my friends and supporters, you continue to sustain me in this job day in and day out, and I want you to know how much I appreciate that. Thank you very much.

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Most importantly, I want to thank the citizens of the Third District for having faith in me and electing me to represent them for another four years. I am truly honored. As Scott Peters said, it's an honor to serve. In fact, I am humbled to have had this opportunity, and to be able to serve an additional four years means a lot to me personally.

Having grown up in Southwest Virginia with very humble beginnings, I never quite understood the possibility of being able to serve in this capacity. So, to obtain that goal with all your help and support means a lot for me personally. I wish my parents were here to join with me and to see that it is possible with hard work and dedication and beliefs and dreams to make it. And for those out there who think that you can't, you can. With the right kind of love, support and encouragement, you will. And together you will be successful.

I cannot think of a more rewarding opportunity than to be able to serve the public. I will do my best not to let you down.

Lastly, I need to acknowledge and thank my staff. I know that I can be very demanding—one of my colleagues told me that—as is the workload in District Three. To my chief of staff, Jeff Gattas, and my entire staff, including my interns, Cheli, George, Kim, Steve and Steve, Ryan, Monica, Madeline, Cathy and Jerry: Thank you all for working so hard to serve the residents of District Three. You do an incredible job each and every day, and I thank you. The citizens of District Three thank you.

We have together, my staff and the District Three communities, and actually communities throughout the city, worked very hard together these last four years—and I think we have been pretty successful. Despite all of the things you hear day to day in the media, there is a lot that has been accomplished.

Together, we've accomplished a number of things in District Three. I'll mention just a few, because I'm one of those people who believes in checking things off so we stay focused on our goals.

- the renovation of our historic North Park Theater;
- the amazingly quick relocation and completion of the Metro Career Center;
- identifying the funding for a long list of capital improvement projects that have been pending for years—in every part of the district;
- converting all street lights in the district to higher pressure sodium lights with the support of the council and the mayor;
- a program to replace deteriorated sidewalks throughout the district;

—the opening and completion of three parks and upgrading of numerous other parks within our older, urban communities;

—the funding of a permanent fire rescue helicopter, something on which I worked directly to bring forward with the help of the mayor and the council;

—a real program to underground our overhead utility lines throughout the city. A real program and a real plan, not just for District Three, but for the entire city;

—we've completed hundreds of units of affordable housing in the district and citywide, with hundreds more underway—to help people continue to live in their own communities. I'm particularly proud to be bringing forward hundreds of units of senior housing—affordable senior housing—in the next couple of years;

—the redevelopment efforts in City Heights and North

Park are truly underway, we can see them;

—our five business districts are continuing to lead the way in revitalization efforts;

—we've been able to bring resources—about \$10 million—back into our jewel,



Balboa Park, to preserve historic buildings;

—two City of Villages projects for Mid-City and North Park that are well underway today; and

—a promise and support for a new library in North Park and a bigger and better library for Mission Hills and Hillcrest.

There are many other projects and accomplishments we could list, but now it is really important to look ahead and determine the work plan for the next four years, and hopefully set a foundation for the future.

First, we need to focus on restoring the good name of our city. San Diego is one of the greatest cities in this country. I believe it. It's why I'm here. Those of us here today know that, but we need to seriously recommit ourselves to working together—that means the civic leaders and elected officials—to restore that good name and reputation. If we don't work as a team on this effort, we will fail. But we cannot fail. For the good of this city, we need to put aside our personal agendas and focus on what it will take to get there. I know that we can do that.

Our fiscal health must be the first and highest priority. And we all need to be a part of fixing this problem.

I want to commend our City Manager, Lamont Ewell, on his leadership and for mapping a plan back to fiscal health. I pledge to Lamont that I will support him in his plan to get us on the right track; whatever it takes. And I will continue to work with you and the council to make this happen. I appreciate your willingness, Lamont, to remain for the next six months to help re-establish that foundation. I look forward to working with you.

We need to restore the faith with our citizens, with all of you, and that means a commitment to open government, especially as we move forward to implement the strong mayor form of government. The restructuring of our current form of government will be a daunting task. It's a critically important task with many details. The public needs to witness our transition in the most transparent fashion. I pledge to you to push hard to ensure that process happens with the public's awareness.

I still see great needs in this city; needs that existed prior to our current list of challenges. I will not forget that we need to determine a revenue source for infrastructure in this city. I've been pleased to partner with Mayor Murphy on creating neighborhoods we can be proud of. That translates into infrastructure. "Neighborhoods we can be proud of" is the sexy way to say infrastructure.

Something that should have already happened in this city is a plan to aid in fixing our aging streets, adding storm drain capacity where it's needed, expanding public facilities in the older communities, adequately maintaining and expanding our park system, mapping our urban canyons and providing protection to these valuable resources. This all requires focused attention and working together with all the stakeholders.

The council needs to provide leadership and a clear case to the public that we must bring forth a ballot measure to fund our growing infrastructure problem.

And to the naysayers on this, let me add, even if we had no pension fund deficit, we still do not have the resources to adequately fund our park services/operations, keep our pools open without a fight annually, provide more police officers and fire fighters along with the critical equipment they need to do the job, to pave our streets, to put books on our library shelves and the list goes on and on and on.

Those of you who believe we have the resources are just plain wrong. I wonder about the real agenda of the people who are trying to keep us from telling the truth to the citizens. You want us to tell you the truth. I tell you the truth today. We can solve the pension fund deficit, we still will not have adequate resources to do what we need to do unless we move forward together with a plan to fund the critical needs. I want to work with you on that plan. I want to work with the Chamber of Commerce and all the interested parties who've said this needs to happen. I will work with you to make sure that we can bring something to the people and hopefully make a case to solve some of these long-standing, decades-old problems.

Affordable housing remains a huge issue in this city. I'd like to continue to work with the stakeholders and make this issue a priority. I know this isn't an easy task since political philosophies tend to get in the way, but I will not let this issue go. And with great respect for my colleagues, who have worked with me on this issue in various ways, I

am proclaiming myself today to be the affordable housing leader. ... Why not? So that means those of you interested in affordable housing, I want to work with you and I guarantee you're gonna have to go through me. I look forward to that challenge. I look forward to that opportunity. It won't be easy. I will be tenacious.

When this city was younger, in 1868 with just 2,301 citizens and 915 households, the citizens asked for and the



Atkins with staff members (left) and her partner Jennifer LeSar (right) as she prepares to cut her inaugural cake, a city tradition.

civic leaders set aside land to create what is now world famous Balboa Park. The year 2015 will be the centennial celebration of the 1915 Panama-California Exposition. At that time, San Diego was the smallest city ever, with a little more than 35,000 citizens, to host a world fair. We rose to the occasion then, as I know we will now. It is time to get started with the planning to celebrate this historic event. We have a place in history and a legacy of Balboa Park, and therefore a responsibility to our predecessors to mark this occasion. I'd like to work with the Mayor to unveil a committee to start preparations for the centennial celebration in San Diego and Balboa Park for the year 2015.

There is a great deal to do. San Diego is a wonderful city. And as Mr. Peters said, we have a vibrant economy, we have dedicated civic leaders, we have wonderful citizens, we have great sunshine. All these things make this the place that people want to commit to and live in. I am so proud to be a part of this community. I am so honored to have the opportunity to serve for another four years.

Fiscal stability, open government, infrastructure, and housing. These are the issues that I think we will need to focus on for the next four years.

I look forward to working with this council and the citizens of San Diego to make our city the best that it can continue to be. It won't be easy, but I think—in fact, I know—we are up to the challenge. We can do it and we will.

Thank you all for taking time to be here today.

METRO VILLAS BRINGS AFFORDABLE HOUSING TO CITY HEIGHTS

City Heights welcomed a new affordable housing facility to the neighborhood Saturday, Dec. 4th, with a grand opening celebration and ribbon-cutting ceremony. The recently completed \$26 million Metro Villas facility is the final phase in the City Heights Metro Center redevelopment project which includes the Metro Career Center employment facility and community amenities.

I view the opening of the Metro Villas as another important step in the revitalization of City Heights as well as toward providing high-quality affordable housing opportunities for San Diegans. It's rewarding to witness first-hand what the opening of Metro Villas means to the residents living in this beautiful development. Housing projects like this help underscore how quickly home ownership can instill a new sense of pride for the families who live here. This entire center is a model for how redevelopment can be a catalyst to bring much-needed housing and services to areas that need it most.

The \$25.5 million, 120-unit Metro Villas is comprised of nine three- and four-story apartment buildings, a laundry building and resident activities building. Designed for very low-income residents, the Metro Villas offers units of one to four bedrooms. Development partners for Metro Villas include San Diego Interfaith Housing and the City Heights Community Development Corporation.

The project will also offer a state-of-the-art job training facility. The 81,500 square-foot Metro Career Center facility offers job seekers and employers a comprehensive menu of services designed to improve worker skill sets and provide qualified employees to businesses large and small. The San Diego Workforce Partnership, together with more than a dozen other partners, provides job training and employment assistance through a joint powers

Councilmember Atkins poses with two young residents of Metro Villas (below) ...



... and helps cut the ceremonial ribbon marking the completion of the housing project (above).

agreement between the City and the County of San Diego. A 489-space parking structure serves both the commercial and residential components of the project.

The Metro Center project was made possible through a unique collaborative effort of the City of San Diego, its Redevelopment Agency (Community and Economic Development Department and the Centre City Development Corporation) and Housing Commission, San Diego Workforce Partnership, City Heights Community Development Corporation, San Diego Interfaith Housing Foundation and San Diego Revitalization Corporation, the development arm of Price Charities.

Redevelopment efforts in City Heights have focused on affordable housing, new commercial and retail space, and improved community facilities and public transit. The Metro Career Center and Metro Villas projects build upon these, truly focusing on community needs.

COUNCIL APPROVES \$4.6 MILLION CONTRACT FOR SIDEWALK AND STREET REPAIR

The City Council recently approved a contract in excess of \$4.6 million to fund much-needed infrastructure improvements citywide. Included in the contract is \$1.3 million for slurry sealing of streets, \$1.8 million for complete street resurfacing, and \$1.5 million for sidewalk replacement, which will help address the general and tree-root-damage backlog.

Even in the difficult financial times we find ourselves in, we are still finding a way to fund important infrastructure improvements. I think it is important that the public understands that we are still getting things done.

The \$1.8 million for street resurfacing will cover eight miles of city streets, while the \$1.3 million in slurry seal funding will impact 34 miles of city streets. Approximately 688 damaged sidewalks will be repaired with the \$1.5 million in funds set aside for this project.

While this isn't as much as I would like to see, the public needs to know that we are still committed to funding infrastructure improvements. I will continue to find ways to fund these critical infrastructure needs.